THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS

BENGALURU • SATURDAY • FEBRUARY 26, 2022 • ₹9.00 • PAGES 24 • LATE CITY EDITION

Ukrainian servicemen walk near the fragments of a downed military aircraft in capital Kyiv on Friday | AP

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Russian forces in Ukraine's capital

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

RUSSIA stepped up its assault on Ukraine on Friday, targeting residential areas, schools and other civilian infrastructure as its forces advanced to the heart of the Ukrainian government — Kyiv — on the second day of bloodshed. On Day 1, 137 citizens were killed and 317 injured, according to the Ukrainian government.

Russian President Vladimir Putin called on the Ukrainian military to depose the country's president Volodymyr Zelensky. "It seems like it will be easier for us to agree with you (Ukrainian military) than this gang of drug addicts and neo-Nazis," Putin said referring to the Ukrainian leadership.

Experts say Putin will replace Zelensky with a pro-Moscow figure, who would keep the country firmly in Russia's circle.

Earlier in the day, reports emerged of pitched battles being fought on the streets of Kyiv between Russian and Ukrainian forces. The city was rocked by the sound of explosions and gunfires soon after dawn, sending people scrambling for cover.

According to Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, Russian missiles rained down on the city, with some targeting civilian areas. With the Russian forces approaching the capital, Zelensky's government decreed a full military mobilisation. All adults between the ages of 18-60 now must stay in the country and fight the invaders. The president also made a dramatic call to Europeans with "combat experience" to volunteer to help defend his country. And, Ukraine's defence ministry urged citizens to stay strong and prepare Molotov cocktails and help neutralise the enemy. "We urge citizens to inform us of troop movements, to make Molotov cocktails, and neutralise the enemy," it said.

Russian forces first arrived on the outskirts of the capital on Thursday when helicopter-borne troops assaulted an airfield just outside the city, close to Obolonsky.

According to US intelligence officials, Kyiv would fall soon. Meanwhile, Britain and nine other northern European defence allies said that further sanctions were needed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine. "The leaders agreed more sanctions were needed, including focusing on Putin's inner circle, building on the measures that had already been agreed," Downing Street office said following the call.

Meanwhile, Kremlin said Putin is ready to send a delegation to Belarus for talks with Ukraine. "No one plans to attack and oppress them, let them return to their families, and let us give the Ukrainian people a chance to decide their future," Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov claimed.

1st batch of Indians reach Romania

The first batch of Indians from Ukraine reached Romania on Friday afternoon, Indian officials said. Two Air India flights will depart for Bucharest on Saturday | P10

Russia bans UK airlines

Russia on Friday banned British airlines from landing in its airports or using the country's airspace in response to UK sanctions on Russia over attack on Ukraine

Pressure mounts on India, as Russia, US seek support

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

WITH the vote coming up on UN Security Council's draft resolution against the Russian aggression in Ukraine on Friday, pressure mounted on India with long-time ally Russia calling for support and another ally, the US, saying anyone who backs Moscow will be "stained by their association"

Russia on Friday said it expects India to back Russia when the resolution comes up for voting. "We highly appreciate India's deep understanding of the current situation as well as the reasons that led to it. We expect India to support Russia at the UN Security Council," Russia's Charge d'affaires Roman Babushkin said. Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called Foreign Minister S Jaishankar and stressed the importance of a "strong collective response" against Russia's military operation.

Russia has been an ally of India for a long time and New Delhi depends on Moscow for critical defence hardware. On the other hand, the US's support is crucial for India in its disputes with China. A recent White House document on Indo-Pacific strategy said the "US will continue to support India's rise and regional leadership, working with India on a range of issues."

MORE REPORTS ON: P8, 10, 12

Evacuation of Indian students stranded in Ukraine started from the Romanian borders on Friday

Students from K'taka board bus to Romania

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Davanagere

FINALLY, stranded students from Chernivtsi in Ukraine, who were studying medicine at the Bukovinian State Medical University, have started their journey back to India through the neighbouring country Romania.

An MEA official said those travelling from Ukraine have reached Romania and they will be evacuated from Bucharest.

Priya from Kunduru village of Davanagere, who studies at BSMU, told *TNIE* that the Indian embassy has started evacuating them and buses were waiting for the students.

She said that it was a sleepless night for her on Thursday as she feared more attacks by Russia and felt safe only after boarding the bus. P4

EXPRESS READ

Harsha murder was 'planned' days ahead

Bengaluru: Bajrang Dal activist Harsha's murder was "planned" 10-15 days before he was stabbed to death on February 20 and he was targetted as he lived close to some of the accused, informed sources said. "They had kept a close watch on his movements," the sources added. | P4

K'taka HC reserves verdict on hijab issue

Bengaluru: The Karnataka High Court on Friday reserved the verdict on a batch of petitions questioning legality of the order passed by the State government to ban hijab on school and college campuses, as marathon arguments which began a fortnight ago concluded. A full bench of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi and Justices Krishna S Dixit and JM Khazi, which commenced hearing on February 10, reserved the verdict after hearing arguments and counter-arguments on the issue. | P4

CBI arrests ex-NSE executive Anand Subramanian

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
@ Chennai / New Delhi / Mumbai

THE Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) arrested former NSE group operating officer Anand Subramanian in the wee hours of Friday, in connection with a 2018 stock market manipulation case, known as the co-location scam. He was arrested from his house in Virugambakkam in Chennai after a three-hour search and inquiry. After receiving a transit warrant, the CBI team took him to Delhi on Friday morning. Sources said the CBI team had been questioning Subramanian for the past two days in Chennai.

He had settled in Chennai and his entire linkages since 2013 through emails and other modes of communications are being reportedly verified by the agency.

According to CBI sources, Subramanian had been working in tandem with former NSE CEO Chitra Ramakrishna.

Ramkrishna, who succeeded former CEO Ravi Narain in 2013, had appointed Subramanian as her advisor and later elevated him as group operating officer on a salary of ₹4.21 crore.

The controversial appointment and later elevation, besides crucial decisions, were guided by an unidentified person who Ramkrishna claimed was a formless mysterious yogi dwelling in the Himalayas, a probe into Ramkrishna's email exchanges during the Sebi-ordered audit showed.

On February 11, Sebi charged Ramkrishna and others with alleged governance lapses in the appointment of Subramanian as well as his promotion.

Subramanian was questioned by the CBI and I-T authorities for many days following the SEBI report.

Markets regulator Sebi levied a fine of ₹3 crore on Ramkrishna, ₹2 crore each on the NSE, Subramanian, Narain, and ₹6 lakh on V R Narasimhan, who was the chief regulatory officer and compliance officer.

Contrary to reports in a section of media hinting that Subramanian is the 'Himalayan yogi' who was in touch with Ramakrishna through emails, the Sebi order of February 11 does not subscribe to this view.

Twitter: Disinformation campaign has begun to deflect attention from the real face of the scam Himalayan Yogi' Yogi is not one man. It is the cabal. Ed being Anand's doesn't mean he is Yogi - @sgurumurthy

HE IS NOT THE HIMALAYAN BABA

The news attributed to the CBI that the Himalayan yogi is Anand Subramanian is fake, TNIE has verified. On February 21, TNIE had carried a front-page story 'Himalayan baba may actually be ex-FinMin babu'. Subsequently, on Feb 23 and 24, columnist S Gurumurthy explained in detail how EY's thesis that Subramanian is the yogi is wrong

JAB-O-METER			
NATIONWIDE	FEB 24	FEB 25
Fresh cases	14,148	13,166
Recoveries	10,000	26,988
Deaths	302	307
KARNATAKA	FEB 24	FEB 25
Fresh cases	588	628
Recoveries	1,842	1,349
Deaths	19	15

TAKE YOUR SHOT
February 24: 28,59,823 doses
February 25: 25,20,820 doses
TOTAL DOSES: 1,77,41,745

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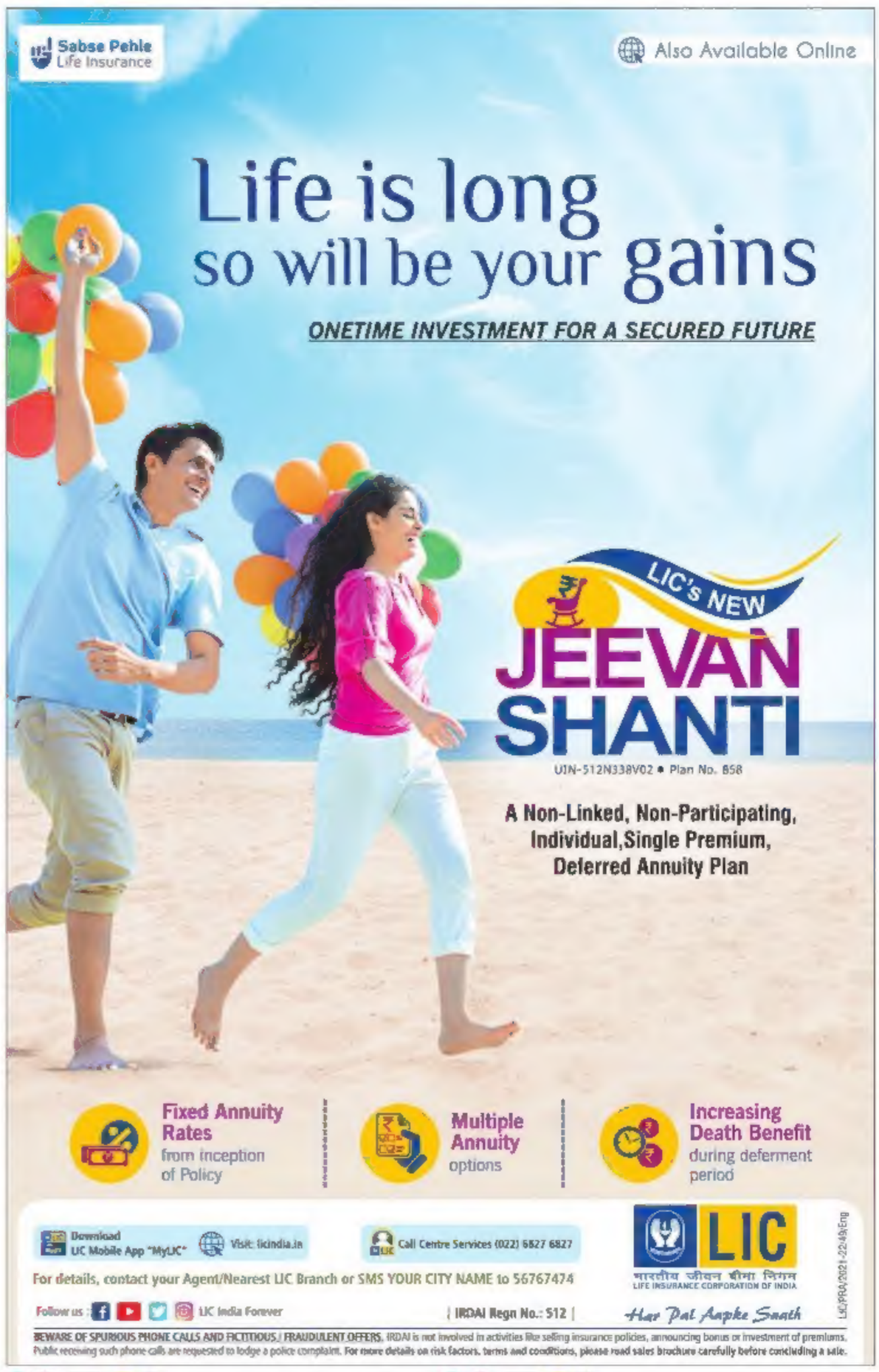
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